

# SEATTLE DOWNTOWN PARKS AND PUBLIC SPACES TASK FORCE

## TASK FORCE MEETING #9 SUMMARY: AUGUST 19, 2005

### Task Force Members

Ken Bounds, Co-chair  
Kate Joncas, Co-chair  
Catherine Stanford, Co-chair  
Bruce Bentley  
B. J. Brooks  
David Brewster  
Tina Bueche  
Jordan Royer  
Ron Sher

### Parks & Rec/MID Staff

Dewey Potter  
Eric Friedli  
Kevin Bergsrud  
Cheryl Fraser  
David Goldberg  
Greg Bucasas  
Victoria Schoenberg

### Consultants

Bonnie Berk

### **Welcome and Announcements**

Ken Bounds opened the meeting and welcomed attendees. Bonnie Berk reviewed the meeting agenda.

### **Discussion of Subcommittee Recommendations: Commercial activities, vending policies**

The Task Force discussed the Subcommittee's conclusions on vending and developed a goal statement, as follows:

The City should encourage appropriate vending as a tool to foster increased pedestrian activity, vibrancy and safety in downtown's destination parks. Vending in the parks should complement and build on the strengths of surrounding businesses activities, rather than competing with them.

The City will need to engage and partner with neighborhood groups in developing plans for each park, including obtaining information and support from surrounding retail businesses.

Points made by Task Force members include:

The City's PRF process for vending could require consultation with local businesses.

Effective new vending could create additional businesses for surrounding firms.

There could be "package deals" developed: wherein vendors agree to locate in more than one park, including parks with less activity currently.

Vending fee policies need to be reexamined: currently vendors pay a fee plus a percentage of sales. It would be more viable for them to pay a base rate and a percentage above a threshold amount. This would be less onerous than the current system.

Any ordinance should provide flexibility to waive fees.

Also, vendors may need to be subsidized, especially in the off-season, to activate the parks.

We need to encourage flexibility – be proactive, offer incentives and think about this as an exercise in incubation.

The message to convey is one of proactivity and sharing risk. We can't just be reactive – we need to **proactively program the downtown parks**.

## **Discussion of Subcommittee Recommendations: Programming, special events policies**

The Task Force discussed the Subcommittee's conclusions on programming and special events and concluded: Individual parks need programming tied to their identity, so the programming helps create an identity and brand for the parks. The City should co-sponsor, not just permit events. (Chicago does this.) Flexibility is needed, and encouragement of programming that creates activity.

The Task Force recommends that each destination park have a series of events, and that the City work with the neighborhoods to design a plan for these activities. The City needs to proactively enter into public-private partnerships to make this happen.

Parks where larger events could be programmed are: Westlake, Freeway, Occidental, Steinbrueck and Pier 62-63. Weddings and smaller events are possible for Myrtle Edwards Park.

Each of the larger parks will need specific improvements to make the programming a success. The streets surrounding Occidental and Freeway Parks will need to feel safe in the evening for event-goers. Parks will need adequate electricity and bathrooms, for example, to accommodate patrons.

Regarding the City's noise ordinance, which has been criticized by event planners as being too strict and limiting, the Task Force recommends that events and programs be specifically included in the larger Citywide review of the noise ordinance, which is upcoming.

Regarding insurance requirements, which can be onerous for smaller organizations, there may be an umbrella organization that can help these entities.

**Teenagers in the parks.** Downtown is a regional draw for teenagers, and parks are a natural place for them to go. Activities at specific park could be developed to attract teenagers, based on their stated interests.

## **Summary of Task Force Recommendations**

The Task Force finds that the City needs to purposefully and proactively program the parks to make them active and energized places – to bring them back to life. The parks have been grouped into three categories – destination parks, neighborhood parks and small public spaces. Within these categories, every park is different and one size definitely doesn't fit all. For the destination parks, three-year plans are needed to define and administer the best future for each site.

**Three-year plans.** In the context of the Task Force's recommendations the park-specific plans will be developed with input from the broader community, the neighborhoods and interested citizens. The plans will be purposeful and intentional about what is to be accomplished at each park. Issues to be addressed could include adjusting park closing hours – at certain times. Park hours of operation need to be simple to understand, clearly communicated and enforced equally. The Plans should engage and establish partnerships with individual park support groups – including Pioneer Square for Occidental, the Aquarium for Waterfront Park, the Market for Steinbrueck Park, and the Freeway Park Neighborhood Association for Freeway Park.

**Implementation tools, policies and procedures.** The City and its public-private partners should use the full range of tools, resources and organizational strategies to best implement these recommendations. The Task Force will discuss these further in coming meetings.

## **Park Character Discussion and Recommendations**

### **Pier 62-63 and Waterfront Park**

**Background.** Pier 62-63 is currently shutdown and needs to be torn down. However, improvements to the waterfront currently planned (the Viaduct and Central Waterfront Master Planning), Seattle's waterfront is going to be a statewide and regional destination. This site offers a park with access to the water and connectivity to the city. The city needs a big site on the waterfront for festivals. These events are economic drivers for downtown and the Belltown area.

**Recommendations.** Waterfront Park is a place for special events, and a perfect place for private parties. The City should connect with the Aquarium regarding planning for this public space.

### **City Hall Park**

This park should be made into a park that's safe and comfortable for everyone. Its recommended identity is as an **activity park for the neighborhood**. There should be comfortable places to sit and activities to engage in and actively watch. To make this happen will require changes in the hardscape, programming and police practices. It may be helpful to put a wrought iron fence around it and close the fence at night. This could help with the safety and security problems the park now has.

### **Victor Steinbrueck Park**

This space is the "park within the market – the open space for the market." It's the only place on the site where you can have a view of the water. The park needs to be integrated into the market, to serve as a complement to the market experience, a beautiful and tranquil place to complement the market's energy and activity and serve as an amenity for residents of the market and Belltown.

Eyes on the park is a problem now. Yet the park has so much potential, we need to figure out how to change the experience there, to make it a place that people want to be. Parts of the park need to be activated, and the public toilet needs to be removed immediately. Sidewalk seating should be facilitated. Remove impediments to Cutters creating sidewalk seating – that is a natural.

The park needs a public-private partnership. The Task Force recommends that the Parks Department renegotiate its relationship with the market on this issue, to achieve the goals noted above.

## **Next Meetings**

The next meetings are scheduled as follows:

Friday, August 19	8:00am
Friday, September 23	8:00am
Friday, September 30	8:00am
Friday, October 14	8:00am

All meetings take place in the Boards & Commissions Conference Room on Level 2 at City Hall.  
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*August 19, 2005*